

Junior Cycle

SHORT COURSE

in MFL Language & Culture



Specification for Junior
Cycle Short Course

Post-Primary

Languages
Initiative



Specification for Junior Cycle Short Course in MFL & Culture (Modern Foreign Language)

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Introduction to Junior Cycle

Junior Cycle education places students at the center of the educational experience, enabling them to actively participate in their communities and in society and to be resourceful and confident learners in all aspects and stages of their lives. Junior Cycle is inclusive of all students and contributes to equality of opportunity, participation and outcome for all. The Junior Cycle allows students to make a greater connection with learning by focusing on the quality of learning that takes place and by offering experiences that are engaging and enjoyable for them, as well as relevant to their lives. These experiences are of a high quality, contribute directly to the physical, mental and social wellbeing of learners, and where possible, provide opportunities for them to develop their abilities and talents in the areas of creativity, innovation and enterprise. The learners' Junior Cycle program builds on their learning to date and actively supports their progress in learning and in addition, supports them in developing the learning skills that will assist them in meeting the challenges of life beyond school.

Rationale

We live in a multilingual society. Learning a new language opens doors to new people, new cultures and more career opportunities. (INSERT A FEW SENTENCES ON THE SPECIFIC TL).

In this course the emphasis is on developing communication skills in (name the TL) at level A1 of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale (FOR AN ASIAN TL specify that the course target is for students to reach the first stage of level A1, referred to as level A1.1 within the 100 hour short course).

This short course develops students' ability to understand spoken and written language, to speak the language, and to interact in a simple way on familiar topics. Students are actively involved in monitoring their own progress and derive enjoyment and confidence from communicating in a new language. They also develop awareness and skills in relation to language learning through comparing and contrasting patterns in the new language and in languages they know. They become better language learners through identifying and developing their own language learning strategies. In a multi-cultural society it is important that young people have the opportunity to learn about other cultures, appreciate similarities and differences and learn to observe, reflect and suspend judgement when discovering the new culture and reflecting back on their own. This course offers opportunities to do this.

Finally, increasingly there are opportunities to learn languages and to discover different cultures using digital tools. In this short course students will learn how to use these tools to support language learning.

By taking part in this course students may have their accomplishments in foreign language learning recognised in their Junior Cycle certificate and benchmarked against the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.



Aim

The aim of this course is for students to develop language proficiency in (name of TL) at level A1 (CEFR scale). The course also aims to develop language awareness and intercultural awareness in combination with digital literacy skills. Specifically, the course encourages all students to:

- actively engage in tasks and activities which foster communicative, receptive and productive skills
- develop an awareness of how languages work and of their preferred language learning styles and strategies
- develop an awareness and appreciation for their own and other cultures
- be reflective and autonomous in their language learning, and become actively involved in monitoring and assessing their progress
- enjoy a language learning experience that will encourage future language learning



Overview: Links

The tables below show how modern foreign languages may be linked to central features of learning and teaching in junior cycle.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND STATEMENTS OF LEARNING (SOL)

STATEMENT	EXAMPLES OF RELEVANT LEARNING IN THE COURSE
<p>‘Listens, speaks, reads and writes in L2 and one other language at a level of proficiency that is appropriate to her or his ability’ SOL2</p>	<p>Students engage in different learning activities where they learn to listen to and understand oral language, communicate with others, and read and write in the language</p>
<p>‘Appreciates and respects how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and culture in which he/she lives’ SOL 6</p>	<p>Students reflect on values, beliefs, attitudes, customs and traditions in cultures associated with (target language) and in comparison with their own cultural identity. Students learn to appreciate and respect cultural differences both within the target culture and in their home culture. They develop curiosity, critical thinking skills and empathy towards people from the target culture, or cultures, and towards people from new cultures in general.</p>
<p>‘Describes, illustrates, interprets, predicts and explains patterns and relationships’ SOL 16</p>	<p>Students investigate how (TL) works by exploring and looking at patterns, such as word endings, sentence order, or the phonological system. Students learn to predict how new words or sentences are formed. They also explore patterns and sounds of the language. They link the spelling, sound and meaning of words thereby appreciating how (TL) looks and sounds, and enjoying creative use of the language. In addition, students are encouraged to explain close or distant relationships between the languages they know, and to identify, describe and apply their preferred language learning strategies.</p>



STATEMENT

'Uses technology and digital media tools to learn, communicate, work and think collaboratively and creatively in a responsible and ethical manner'
 SOL24

EXAMPLES OF RELEVANT LEARNING IN THE COURSE

Students source information on the internet related to (target language) and its related culture, or cultures. Students are also encouraged to express themselves creatively in (target language) using ICT tools for text, audio and video (which may include written as well as oral language). Students use technology for self-access learning and to assess their progress by completing a digital portfolio, an e-ELP or by using other online learning tools. Students also use technology to interact with speakers of (target language) in a safe and responsible manner by using a range of ICT tools such as blogs or Skype.



LINKS BETWEEN JUNIOR CYCLE MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND KEY SKILLS

In addition to their specific content and knowledge, the subjects and short courses of junior cycle provide students with opportunities to develop a range of key skills. The junior cycle curriculum focuses on eight key skills.

Figure 1:
Key skills of junior cycle





This course offers opportunities to support all key skills, but some are particularly significant. The examples below identify some of the elements that are related to learning activities in the foreign language classroom. Teachers can also build many of the other elements of particular key skills into their classroom planning.

Key Skills	Key Skills Elements	Activities: Examples
Being literate	Developing my spoken language	Students carry out routine classroom interactions in (TL) effectively
	Developing my understanding of words and language	Students take turns to introduce their favorite movie star, athlete or music band and agree on the class favourite
Being creative	Imagining	Students imagine and present the life and interests of a second level student in (the TL country) using digital media
	Exploring options and alternatives	Students explore and discuss potential destinations for a visit to (the target country)
Communicating	Performing and presenting	Students prepare and present a role play based on a real life situation
	Using digital technology	Students make self-introductions using avatars, for example, Voki; or interview an e-pal, for example on Skype; or record an interview in class
Managing information and thinking	Gathering, recording, organizing and evaluating	Students use a portfolio to plan, assess and present evidence of their learning
	Thinking creatively and critically	Students engage in group work to develop a web quest or cultural project for their peers



Key Skills	Key Skills Elements	Activities: Examples
Being numerate	Expressing ideas mathematically	Students present the results of a very simple survey such as food preferences, music or sport preferences
	Seeing patterns, trends and relationships	Students explore linguistic and cultural patterns in relation to time and the calendar
Managing myself	Setting and achieving personal goals	Students set themselves personal goals by selecting can-do statements
	Being able to reflect on my own learning	Students reflect on their progress, carry out self-assessment, and chart their progress over time possibly by using a language portfolio or e-portfolio
Communicating	Being confident	Students produce a short video for pen-pals or e-pals
	Being positive about learning	Students talk about their successes in learning as recorded in their learning journal or portfolio
Working with others	Learning with others	Students engage in effective peer-assessment
	Working with others through digital technology	Students conduct a short comparative survey with e-pals, for example on Skype



OVERVIEW: COURSE

The strands in this short course are:

- Strand 1:** Communicating in (target language): Students learn to communicate in a simple manner on topics that are familiar to them.
- Strand 2:** Reflecting on (target language) culture and how I relate to it: Students learn to appreciate and respect cultural differences both within the target cultures and their own culture (intercultural awareness).
- Strand 3:** Reflecting on how (target language) works and how I learn: Students learn to reflect on the languages they know, on how (target language) works and what strategies help them in their language learning.
- Strand 4:** Using digital media to explore and communicate in (target language): Students learn to use ICT tools to learn language and discover different cultures.

In this course strands are designed to be interwoven. This enables students to develop all aspects of language learning as they progress through the course. Intercultural and language awareness need to be incorporated into the language curriculum for students to develop an appreciation and understanding of the language and culture(s) studied, an awareness of their own culture, and the development of skills that will allow them to be competent, adaptable communicators.

The short course adopts an activity and tasks-based approach to language learning. Activities and task should encourage students to engage in lifelike communication exchanges and should be carefully planned to include all the language skills. The target language should be the preferred language for learning and teaching.

Team work and pair work is encouraged throughout all strands. Students collaborate, seek feedback, reflect and provide feedback on their learning and experiences. Communicative activities as well as reflective activities should be in evidence across all strands.

Students are encouraged to complete self-assessment checklists as well as to maintain a learning journal.



The Classroom-Based Assessment reflects the learning students undertake in this short course. Schools have the flexibility to adapt any short course to suit their particular needs and school context. If adapting the course, schools may also need to adapt the Classroom-Based Assessment, so that it reflects the learning their students undertook. Schools may also develop their own short course(s) and related classroom-based assessment. Guidelines for schools who wish to develop their own short course(s) are available.

The learning outcomes of this course are broadly aligned with the level indicators for Level 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications (Appendix 1).

The Modern Foreign Language short course has been designed for approximately 100 hours of student engagement.



EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS

Expectations for students is an umbrella term that links learning outcomes with annotated examples of student work. Schools who design their own short courses may wish to create a bank of examples of student work for discussion and for future reference

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning outcomes are statements that describe what knowledge, understanding, skills and values students should be able to demonstrate having completed this junior cycle short course in a Modern Foreign Language. The learning outcomes set out in the following tables apply to all students and represent outcomes for students at the end of their period of study (approximately 100 hours).

The outcomes are numbered within each strand. The numbering is intended to support teacher planning in the first instance and does not imply any hierarchy of importance across the outcomes themselves.



STRAND 1:
 COMMUNICATING IN (target language)
 (COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE)

Students learn about:	Students should be able to
<p>1. Listening:</p>	<p>1.1 Follow simple classroom or other instructions and directions to a place when spoken clearly and slowly</p> <p>1.2 Identify numbers related to a familiar topic when spoken clearly in a conversation, a presentation or a game</p> <p>1.3 Demonstrate an understanding of a simple announcement, presentation, song/poem on a familiar topic</p> <p>1.4 Demonstrate an understanding of a very simple conversation on a familiar topic</p>
<p>2. Reading:</p>	<p>2.1 Identify and pronounce letters from the alphabet/syllabet, familiar words and phrases</p> <p>2.2 Recognise the meaning of familiar words and phrases</p> <p>2.3 Identify key information on familiar topics in a variety of media such as Manga, videogames, posters, printed ads or menus, brochures</p> <p>2.4 Read simple messages on cards or digital media such as blogs, facebook or electronic media</p>



Students learn about:

Students should be able to

3. Spoken interaction:

- 3.1** Take part in routine classroom interactions
- 3.2** Use numbers in predictable everyday life interactions, including time and calendars
- 3.3** Understand and use simple words and phrases for predictable social interactions such as meeting and greeting, invitations, meeting arrangements etc.
- 3.4** Ask for and give very simple information on familiar topics about people, places or events

4. Spoken production:

- 4.1** Pronounce words and names accurately
- 4.2** Make a short presentation about themselves
- 4.3** Give simple classroom or other instructions
- 4.4** Make a very simple report or presentation on a familiar topic, including numbers when relevant

5. Writing:

- 5.1** Use the written alphabet/syllabet
- 5.2** Fill in a simple form or profile with personal information
- 5.3** Write captions for pictures or digital presentations on familiar topics
- 5.4** Write very short descriptions on familiar topics



STRAND 2:

REFLECTING ON (TARGET LANGUAGE) CULTURE AND HOW I RELATE TO IT

Students learn about:	Students should be able to
<p>1. Stereotypes, perceptions and representations</p>	<p>1.1 Identify their own and other common stereotypes about (TL Country, [other (TL) speaking countries] and (TL) speakers</p> <p>1.2 Investigate where their own or other common stereotypes about (TL Country) and (target language) speakers come from</p> <p>1.3 Distinguish between fact and opinion in relation to one commonly held view of (TL Country), and one commonly held view of their own country</p> <p>1.4 Reflect on whether their perceptions, representations and feelings about (TL Country) and (target language) speakers have changed during the course, and explain how and why</p>
<p>2. (TL Country) and (TL) speaking countries, and my own country: key facts and features</p>	<p>2.1 Identify similarities and differences between (TL Country) or another (target language) speaking country and their own country</p> <p>2.2 Identify links between (TL Country) or a (target language) speaking country and their own country</p> <p>2.3 Compare and contrast similarities and differences between (TL Country), or a (target language) speaking country, and their own country in one specific area of interest</p> <p>2.4 Present similarities, differences and links between (TL Country) and their own country in one specific area of interest</p>
<p>3. People and daily life in (TL Country) and (TL) speaking countries and in my own country</p>	<p>3.1 Identify similarities and differences in relation to particular features of people and daily life between (TL Country), or a country they know, and their own country, and diversity within (TL Country), and their own country, such as with reference to eating habits socialising or school life</p> <p>3.2 Compare and contrast similarities and differences in relation to one specific feature of people and daily life between (TL Country), or a country they know, and their own country, and diversity within (TL Country) and their own country</p>



Students learn about:

Students should be able to

	<p>3.3 Examine underlying beliefs, attitudes or values which explain a particular custom in (TL Country) in comparison to one in their country</p> <p>3.4 Justify a particular behaviour or attitude encountered among people in (TL Country)</p>
<p>4. People from (TL Country) and (target language) speaking countries and I</p>	<p>4.1 Discuss their opportunities and personal motivation to meet people from (TL Country) or (target language) speakers in their community, abroad or through digital media</p> <p>4.2 Explore similarities and differences in a particular custom or behaviour with someone/people from (TL Country), or (target language) speakers, when meeting them in person, online or by imagining an encounter</p> <p>4.3 Explain the difference between one of my own and someone else's custom or behaviour by looking at our underlying beliefs, attitudes and values</p> <p>4.4 Examine one cultural difference in traditions, customs or behaviours which they would either embrace or feel uncomfortable with, and explain why</p>



STRAND 3:

REFLECTING ON HOW (TARGET LANGUAGE) WORKS AND HOW I LEARN (LANGUAGE AWARENESS)

Students learn about:	Student should be able to
<p>1. (Target language) and the other languages I know</p>	<p>1.1 Investigate the (target language) writing system compared to the writing systems of the other languages they know, including SMS language comparisons</p> <p>1.2 Identify differences between the (target language) sound system and the sound systems of the other languages they know</p> <p>1.3 Identify loanwords and cognates between (the TL) and the other languages they know</p> <p>1.4 Compare and contrast differences in language use between (target language) and the other languages they know, such as forms of address, naming conventions, variations linked to generation or gender, body language etc.</p>
<p>2. How (TL) works</p>	<p>2.1 Identify language patterns in (target language) such as those found in script, word order, marks for gender or number, use of personal pronouns, as well as key aspects of phonology such as pitch accent in (target language), tones in Chinese, or stress, new sounds or silent letters in other languages</p> <p>2.2 Describe language patterns of (target language) such as those mentioned above</p> <p>2.3 Apply language patterns of (target language) such as those mentioned above to already acquired language</p> <p>2.4 Hypothesise about features of (target language) in order to produce simple new language</p>
<p>3. Enjoying and being creative in (TL)</p>	<p>3.1 Explore the patterns and sounds of language through songs, chants, raps and rhymes, and link spellings, sounds and meanings of words</p> <p>3.2 Describe oral or written features of (target language) which they enjoy</p> <p>3.3 Express themselves creatively by producing language for aesthetic purposes such as calligraphy</p> <p>3.4 Express themselves creatively using drama and role play</p>



Students learn about:

Student should be able to

4. How I learn languages

4.1 Identify their preferred language learning strategies such as strategies for building up vocabulary, or for developing listening, speaking, reading or writing skills

4.2 Explain their preferred language learning strategies such as how to learn new words or what to do when they don't understand

4.3 Apply their preferred language learning strategies to their learning in class and out of class

4.4 Assess their language learning



STRAND 4:

USING DIGITAL MEDIA TO EXPLORE AND COMMUNICATE IN (TARGET LANGUAGE) (DIGITAL LITERACY)

Students learn about:	Student should be able to:
<p>1. Accessing resources and informaton</p>	<p>1.1 Source and share resources and information on the internet in or about (target language)</p> <p>1.2 Organise online resources to manage their learning</p> <p>1.3 Investigate new facts about (target language) and culture by using digital tools</p> <p>1.4 Evaluate resources on (target language) and culture that they find in digital media</p>
<p>2. Expressing oneself</p>	<p>2.1 Use ICT tools to record themselves and monitor their progress in the spoken language</p> <p>2.2 Use a (target language) keyboard to produce a text in (target language)</p> <p>2.3 Use word processing tools to produce, edit, correct and improve their written language</p> <p>2.4 Express themselves creatively in (target language) through the use of digital tools combining oral, written and visual language</p>
<p>3. Communicating</p>	<p>3.1 Interact orally with others in (target language) in a safe and responsible manner using a range of ICT tools such as Skype or video-conferencing</p> <p>3.2 Interact in written form with others in (target language) in a safe and responsible manner by using digital tools such as email or blogs</p> <p>3.3 Present or relay information through the use of digital technology</p> <p>3.4 Use digital media tools to give and receive feedback from teachers, peers and correspondents</p>



Students learn about:

Student should be able to:

4. Documenting

4.1 Use digital tools to document and store evidence of their learning

4.2 Present evidence of their learning to others using digital tools

4.3 Assess and evaluate their learning using digital tools such as an ELP, Portfolio, or e-Portfolio

4.4 Plan and set learning goals by using digital tools such as an ELP, Portfolio, or e-Portfolio



Assessment and Reporting

In this short course assessment supports learning in a wide variety of approaches. It includes teacher-led assessment, both on-going and final assessment, and student-led assessment including self-assessment and peer-feedback. All learning outcomes lend themselves to be assessed on an ongoing basis as students engage in different learning activities such as responding to and initiating communication through the TL, investigating, comparing and contrasting languages or cultures, identifying differences and similarities, reflecting, presenting and exchanging information. In this context, students, with their teachers, reflect upon and make judgements about their own and their peers' learning by looking at the features of quality of particular activities or pieces of work. They plan the next steps of their learning, based on feedback they receive and on self-assessment of their progress.

Self-assessment checklists

The emphasis in this course is on what students 'can do' as they progress through their learning. 'Can-do descriptors' have been developed in line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). 'Can-do descriptors' and learning outcomes are used by teachers to plan and communicate a lesson's learning goals to students. Students' reflection is supported by self-assessment checklists. These checklists are made up of 'can-do descriptors'; they include all strands in the course and mirror the course learning outcomes. They support students' reflective learning through the process of setting goals, self-assessment and recording progress. Once the can-do approach and self-assessment checklists have been thoroughly introduced in class, students are encouraged to refer back to their checklists independently. The self-assessment checklists are not included in assessment for certification.

Online assessment/feedback tools

Students are encouraged to avail of existing online language learning tools in the context of independent study. Progress charts and other forms of feedback built-in to such software can be a key motivational feature for many learners. Such forms of feedback provide learners with an opportunity to measure their progress, set themselves new goals and challenge themselves to improve the particular skill tested in the self-selected activity or 'game'. Learners are given the opportunity to test themselves against each other and some may enjoy an element of healthy competition when comparing their results with peers. This form of assessment is used purely for self-motivation; it is not included in assessment for certification.



Classroom-Based Assessment

Classroom-Based Assessments are the occasions when the teacher assesses the students in the specific assessment(s) that are set out in the subject or short course specification. Junior Cycle short courses will have one Classroom-Based Assessment. Where feasible, teachers of short courses will participate in learning and assessment review meetings. In this short course classroom based assessment will have two components: a language and culture project and the students' learning journal.

Classroom-Based Assessment: Language and culture project

Students will complete a language and culture project as their Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA). Students are given an opportunity to choose a topic or issue that is of interest to them and to carry out an exploration over time leading to an oral presentation. The development of spoken interaction and spoken production will be central to this and students will also demonstrate their cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness. Other skills which will be developed include basic research skills, organising materials, using key phrases and questions to give shape to ideas, as well as creative skills needed to prepare a presentation. This Classroom-Based Assessment provides useful opportunities for using a range of oral presentation styles. In addition, the activity offers students opportunities, where appropriate, to collaborate with classmates and others in gathering and developing materials, as they prepare for their presentation.

A particular purpose of the Classroom-Based Assessment will be to facilitate developmental feedback to students during their engagement with the task and at the end of the process. The Classroom-Based Assessment for the MFL short course can be completed in second or third year.

Learning Journal

In this course students develop practical modern language and digital literacy skills, they also develop language and intercultural awareness. The Learning Journal helps students recognise, reflect on, and record their progress in different areas of learning, and throughout the course. It also allows them to provide evidence of their learning and showcase their achievements. Students make entries to their journals on a regular basis. Students are encouraged to make the journal their own, however they are advised that their teacher will periodically check their entries to provide them with feedback. At the end of the course students submit their journal for inclusion in the overall assessment for certification.



Features of quality

The features of quality support student and teacher judgement of the Classroom-Based Assessments and are the criteria that will be used by teachers to assess students' language and culture project. More detailed material on assessment and reporting in this short course, including features of quality and details of the practical arrangements related to assessment of this Classroom-Based Assessment, will be available in separate assessment guidelines for (name of short course). The guidelines will include, for example, the suggested length and formats for students' projects, and support in using 'on balance' judgement in relation to the features of quality.

Inclusive assessment

Inclusive assessment practices, whether as part of ongoing assessment or the Classroom-Based Assessment, are a key feature of teaching and learning in schools. Accommodations, e.g. the support provided by a Special Needs Assistant or the support of assistive technologies, should be in line with the arrangements the school has put in place to support the student's learning throughout the year. Where a school judges that a student has a specific physical or learning difficulty, reasonable accommodations may be put in place to remove, as far as possible, the impact of the disability on the student's performance in the Classroom-Based Assessment.

Accommodations which enable all students to access learning and assessment are based on specific needs. For example, a student who cannot physically type may use free dictation software to complete ongoing assessments and the Classroom-Based Assessment. Equally, a student who cannot speak may draw/write/type/create visuals and subtitles to present and communicate ideas. A student with a specific learning difficulty may benefit from having learning tasks and activities presented in a different way.

Comprehensive guidelines on inclusion in post-primary schools are available [here](#).

Guidelines for teachers of students with general learning disabilities are available [here](#).



Appendix 1: Level indicators for Level 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications

This short course has been developed in alignment with the level indicators for Level 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications. Usually, for Level 3 certification and awards, the knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.

NFQ Level 3

NQF	3
Knowledge Breadth	Knowledge moderately broad in range
Knowledge Kind	Mainly concrete in reference and with some comprehension of relationship between knowledge elements
Know-how and skill Range	Demonstrate a limited range of practical and cognitive skills and tools
Know-how and skill Selectivity	Select from a limited range of varied procedures and apply known solutions to a limited range of predictable problems
Competence Context	Act within a limited range of contexts
Competence Role	Act under direction with limited autonomy; function within familiar, homogeneous groups
Competence Learning to learn	Learn to learn within a managed environment
Competence Insight	Assume limited responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour